

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 042207Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6388

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0876

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, NU

SUBJECT: CHAMBER OF INDUSTRIES CALL FOR END OF MARTIAL LAW

REF STATE 039938 (NOTAL)

1. FOLLOWING BACKGROUND MAY BE OF INTEREST TO DEPARTMENT
IN APPRAISING CHAMBER OF INDUSTRIES (CADIN) VOTE FEBRUARY 10
TO PETITION PRESIDENT SOMOZA TO LIFT MARTIAL LAW AND RESTORE
CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES: (A) CADIN, ALTHOUGH A NON-PARTISAN
PRIVATE SECTOR GROUP, HAS AMONG ITS MEMBERS BUSINESSMEN
FROM VARIOUS POLITICAL FACTIONS. FOR INSTANCE, SOME--PERHAPS
15 OR SO--REPRESENT SOMOZA-OWNED COMPANIES, AND AT THE SAME
TIME, OPPOSITION LEADER PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO IS AN ACTIVE
MEMBER. NONETHELESS, THE MAJORITY OF CADIN MEMBERS SO
FAR AS WE CAN TELL ARE MORE OR LESS APOLITICAL.

(B) CADIN HAS, HOWEVER, IN THE POST-EARTHQUAKE PERIOD
UNDER THE AGGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP OF ITS PRESIDENT, ALFONSO
ROBELO, ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR MOVEMENT
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TO STRENGTHEN ITS INFLUENCE IN PUBLIC SECTOR POLICY MAKING.

ROBELO HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY OUTSPOKEN IN PUBLIC DISAGREEMENTS WITH THE GON.

IN DECEMBER, ROBELO CAME IN FOR SOME STIFF PERSONAL ATTACKS IN SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES FOR HIS OUTSPOKEN OPPOSITION TO ELECTRICITY RATE INCREASES. CABIN ALSO MADE REPRESENTATIONS TO GON IN APRIL 1974 ON BEHALF OF CHAMORRO'S LA PRENSA IN ITS CENSORSHIP

PROBLEM. CADIN IS NOT NEW TO CONFRONTATION WITH SOMOZA.

(C) REGARDING THE CADIN LETTER ON MARTIAL LAW, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE RESOLUTION TO SEND IT WAS INTRODUCED BY A MEMBER SYMPATHETIC TO PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO COMPLETE WITH A DRAFT WHICH WAS READ TO THE ASSEMBLY. AFTER A SPIRITED DEBATE, IN WHICH AN AMENDMENT CONDEMNING TERRORISM WAS REJECTED, THE RESOLUTION PASSED.

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF CADIN IS 338. LA PRENSA STATED THAT 111 WERE IN ATTENDANCE WHEN THE MEETING BEGAN, BUT THAT 8 HAD DEPARTED BEFORE THE VOTE WAS TAKEN, AND THAT THE VOTE ITSELF WAS 61 IN FAVOR WITH 29 AGAINST AND 13 ABSTENTIONS. NOVEDADES SAID THAT 99 WERE PRESENT, OF WHOM 49 VOTED IN FAVOR. NOVEDADES DID NOT GIVE FIGURES ON THE NUMBERS OPPOSED OR ABSTAINING. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY DOES NOT INFER THAT A LARGER ATTENDANCE WOULD OR WOULD NOT HAVE MEANT A CHANGE IN THE VOTING PATTERN; NO ONE CAN KNOW.

(D) NOVEDADES THEREAFTER PLAYED DOWN THE EVENT AS AN ACTION TAKEN BY ONLY A MINORITY OF CADIN MEMBERS AND RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT CADIN COULD BE DISSOLVED FOR ISSUING POLITICAL STATEMENT IN CONTRAVENTION OF ITS STATUTES. NOVEDADES' COVERAGE APPARENTLY ACCURATELY REFLECTED PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S OWN VERY NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE RESOLUTION. WITH TROUBLES ON THE LABOR FRONT AS THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS GEARED UP FOR ANOTHER STRIKE, HE WAS IN NO MOOD TO BE SNIPED AT BY MANAGEMENT.

(E) NEWLY-ELECTED CADIN PRESIDENT, ENRIQUE DREYFUS, DELIVERED THE LETTER TO MINISTRE OF GOVERNMENT MORA ONLY TO HAVE IT RETURNED TO HIM THE NEXT DAY WITH MORA SITTING THAT HE SHOULD TAKE THIS "ATOM BOMB" TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA HIMSELF. IN A PRIVATE INTERVIEW, SOMOZA HIMSELF REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE LETTER FROM DREYFUS SAYING THAT TO DO SO WOULD BLIGE HIM TO TAKE OFFICIAL COGNIZANCE OF WHAT HE INTERPRETED AS A VIOLATION OF CADIN'S STATUTES PROHIBITING PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY. SOMOZA
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PARTICULARLY OBJECTED TO THE LETTER'S ASSERTION THAT CONDITIONS NECESSITATING MARTIAL LAW NO LONGER EXIST. AFTER DREYFUS' CHAT WITH SOMOZA, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CADIN DECIDED TO FOREGO FURTHER ACTION, IN EFFECT BACKING DOWN.

(F) DREYFUS, WHO HAD TO FIELD THIS HOT POTATO, PROBABLY REFLECTS THE SENTIMENT OF OTHER CADIN MEMBERS WHEN HE TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT THE

AMENDMENT TO THE LETTER CONDEMNING VIOLENCE HAD BEEN APPROVED. IN THIS WAY, CADIN COULD HAVE MADE ITS POINT ABOUT MARTIAL LAW WHILE AT THE SAME TIME RENDERING IT MORE PALATABLE TO THE REGIME.

2. THE CADIN VOTE PROBABLY REFLECTED CURRENT OPINION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THAT THE NATION SHOULD RETURN TO NORMAL. FEW BUSINESSMEN APPEAR TO SHARE THE GON'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THE THREAT OF CONTINUED TERRORIST ACTIVITY. NOR DO THEY PROFESS TO SEE ANY REAL EFFECT OF THE STATE OF SIEGE EXCEPT IN THE CENSORSHIP OF LA PRENSA, WHICH HAS BEEN A VALUED SPOKESMAN OF THEIRS ON OCCASION. ADDITIONALLY, MANY BELIEVE THAT LIFTING MARTIAL LAW AND RETURNING TO NORMAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY WOULD IMPROVE THE COMMERCIAL AND INVESTMENT CLIMATE.
SHELTON

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